NEWSLETTER #1 AUGUST 2025

OSLO CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES NEWSLETTER



A LOOK BACK AT OCEH'S BEGINNINGS

Since our launch in November 2024, we've hosted seminars, lab talks, and workshops – building a lively community in environmental humanities.

DEAR FRIENDS

This is a special moment for us: the very first newsletter from the Oslo Center for Environmental Humanities. Over the past semester, OCEH has grown into a lively hub of research, events, and conversations – and we'd love to bring you closer to it all.

In this newsletter, you'll meet some of our team, hear about what our research groups have been up to, revisit highlights from spring 2025, and discover a curiosity from the field of environmental humanities.

We'll be sending these updates every two months, and we hope they can be a small window into our ongoing work. Thank you for joining us – your interest and support mean a lot.

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WHAT'S NEW FROM OUR RESEARCH GROUPS

Our three research groups have been busy this semester, exploring different corners of the environmental humanities. Here's a glimpse of their latest focus:

Ecocritical Literary and Cultural Studies (EcoLit)

In June, EcoLit joined forces with colleagues from Venice and Cologne for the workshop Deltas of Change – Keywords for Living Together. Over three days in Venice, participants explored river deltas as sites where multispecies lives intersect, discussing concepts like conviviality, entanglement, and interbeing – while also visiting the Venice Biennale for inspiration.



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Environmental Art

This spring, the Environmental Art group hosted a lively series of events – from a film screening of Iorram (Boat Song) to talks by Franklin Ginn, Holly Watkins, and Camilla Mørk – exploring how art, music, and performance engage with ecological questions in creative and challenging ways.



© Thomas Fearnley, Grindelwaldgletscheren (1838). National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design. Photo: Børre Høstland

Multispecies Landscapes Lab

Last semester, the Multispecies Landscapes Lab hosted workshops on Probiotic Landscapes and Ecologies of Health and Disease in Eurasia, alongside the event On Human Heads, which traced the multispecies histories of hair and wigs. Together, these gatherings highlighted how humans and other beings have long shaped one another's lives and the landscapes they inhabit.



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SPRING 2025 AT OCEH: A SEMESTER OF FIRSTS

Our first full semester was filled with events that brought people together, sparked conversations, and offered new tools for research. Here are some of the moments that stood out:

OCEH Socials

- *Museum Visit: Beyond Fast Fashion* (Feb 12, 2025) – A guided visit to the National Museum exhibition on the environmental and social costs of fashion.

Lunch Seminars

- *More-Than-Human Encounters in Islamic Eco-Theology* (May 12, 2025) – **Marita L. Furehaug (UiO)** introduced her PhD research on Muslim environmentalisms in Egypt, showing how Quranic cosmology and eco-theology can be read through more-than-human perspectives.
- *The Microbial Politics of Britain's Sewage Pollution Scandal* (Apr 28, 2025) – **Oscar Hartman Davies** (KTH, Stockholm) explored how microbes, rivers, and politics intertwine in debates around sewage pollution in England.
- *Living Mycelium Walls – Polysaccharide Worlds and Engineering Lichenisation* (Mar 10, 2025) – **Anna-Katharina Laboissière (UiO)** discussed her research on living building materials made with fungi and bacteria, rethinking architecture as a multispecies collaboration.
- *Hunting in a Sea of Ghosts* (Feb 17, 2025) – **Ting J. Yiu**, writer, spearfisher, and freediver, shared her creative work weaving environmental criticism, folklore, and personal migration stories through the watery worlds of eels, whales, and sea goddesses.

Academic Toolkits

- *Publishing in Environmental Humanities* (May 5, 2025) – Insights on the publishing process, with **Dr. Dolly Jørgensen** (University of Stavanger).
- *How to Write a PhD Proposal* (Jan 29, 2025) – Practical strategies for PhD applicants.

Other Events

- *Book Launch: Digital Ecologies – Mediating more-than-human worlds* (Apr 30, 2025) – Launch and discussion of the new volume with editors

HIGHLIGHTS IN IMAGES



Hunting in a Sea of Ghosts – Writer and freediver Ting J. Yiu on watery worlds and storytelling.



Living Mycelium Walls – Anna-Katharina Laboissière on building with fungi and bacteria.



Book Launch: Digital Ecologies – Editors and contributors presenting the new volume.



How to Write a PhD Proposal – Toolkit session with tips for aspiring researchers.



COMING SOON

As summer turns to autumn, OCEH will host a mix of social gatherings, talks, and courses – here's what's on the horizon:

- **Sep 2 – Timo Maran: Ecosemiotics**

A public talk introducing ecosemiotics, followed by responses from Annelie Ott and Anna-Katharina Laboissière.

- **Sep 2–3 – PhD Course: Ecosemiotics in the Field**

A hands-on introduction to ecosemiotics, combining readings, discussion, and a guided field excursion.

- **Sep 10 – OCEH Social: Autumn Bonfire**

Our annual bonfire by the lake – bring snacks, friends, and warm clothes for an evening outdoors.

- **Sep 19 – Antonia Thomas: Working Across Disciplines**

On how creative practice can open new ways of doing research in the humanities.

- **Sep 23 – Audra Mitchell: Revenant Ecologies**

A talk on extinction, unconditionality, and rethinking our relationships with Earth.

- **Oct 22 – Stuart Earle Strange: What is Anthropomorphism?**

Exploring human-macaque encounters in Singapore as a way of rethinking interspecies cooperation.

Stay tuned for more details and additional events on our website and social media!

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...



STRADIVARIUS VIOLINS OWE THEIR SOUND TO A MINI ICE AGE?

Colder winters (1300-1850) made trees grow denser wood - perfect for instruments. As the climate warms, the sound of future violins could change.

Did you know that climate can shape the sound of music?

The famous Stradivarius violins – prized for their rich, resonant tone – may owe part of their magic to... colder winters.

During the Little Ice Age (roughly 1300–1850), trees across Europe grew more slowly due to cooler temperatures. That resulted in denser, more uniform wood – ideal for making instruments.

Stradivari's violins were crafted during this period, and CT scans show they were built from remarkably even tonewood. It's one reason why their sound is still unmatched.

Today, as the climate warms, the forests that give us instrument-quality wood are changing – and with them, the sound of future violins, guitars, and pianos.

Just one more way our environment is deeply connected to culture, creativity, and what we hear.

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WHO WE ARE AT OCEH

Meet the Team Creating the Center



HUGO REINERT
Head of OCEH

Hugo is an Associate Professor of Cultural History and Environmental Humanities at the University of Oslo, and since 2025 he has served as the head of OCEH. His research spans topics from forests to deep-sea environments, with a special focus on how human and nonhuman worlds intersect.

As the center's second leader, Hugo continues to guide OCEH's growing community of researchers and students, strengthening its role as a hub for environmental humanities in Norway and beyond.



KAROLINA POLTORAK
Admin. Coordinator

Karolina serves as Adviser and Administrative Coordinator at OCEH, overseeing the center's daily operations and supporting the OCEHLab. She brings together project management, administrative guidance, event planning, and research support to help OCEH run smoothly day-to-day.



SONJA IRENE ÅMAN
Lab Manager

Sonja is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Environmental Humanities at the University of Oslo, where she explores the politics and cultural histories of marine life – like herring migrations and Indigenous whaling practices.

Trained as an interdisciplinary environmental humanities researcher, Sonja weaves together environmental history, political ecology, and rich storytelling to examine how people and nonhuman worlds intersect.

STAY CONNECTED



Want to keep up with OCEH between newsletters? Visit our website for news, updates, and upcoming events – and follow us on social media for more.

hf.uio.no/oceh

We are on Bluesky and Facebook:

Edited by Karolina Poltorak, on behalf of the Oslo Center for Environmental Humanities. We hope you've enjoyed this first issue – more to come soon!